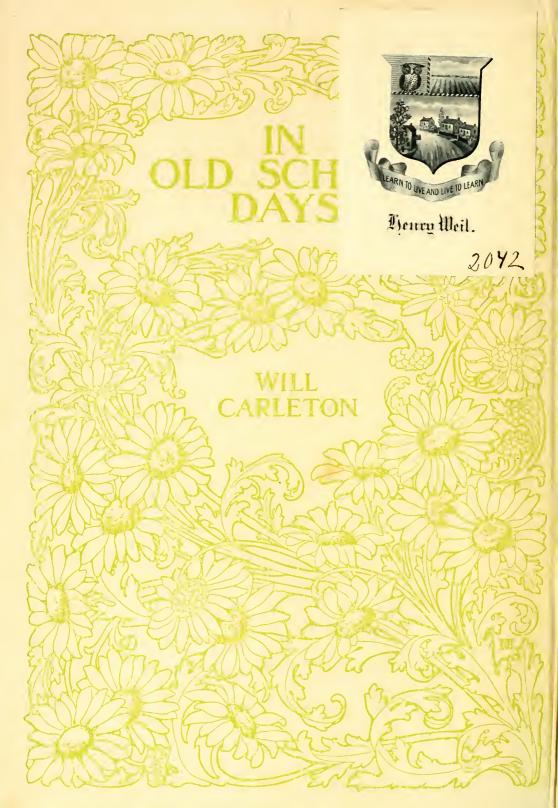
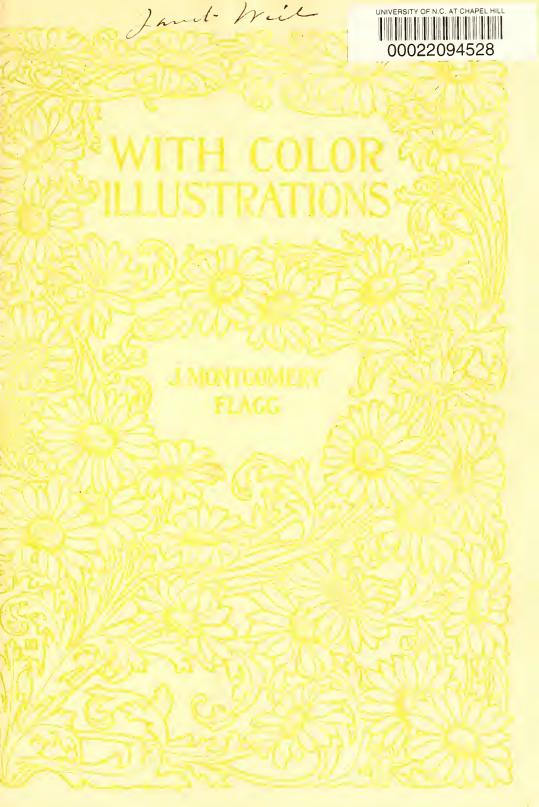
OLD SCHOOL DAYS



WILL CARLETON
ILLUSTRATED BY
J. MONTGOMERY FLAGG

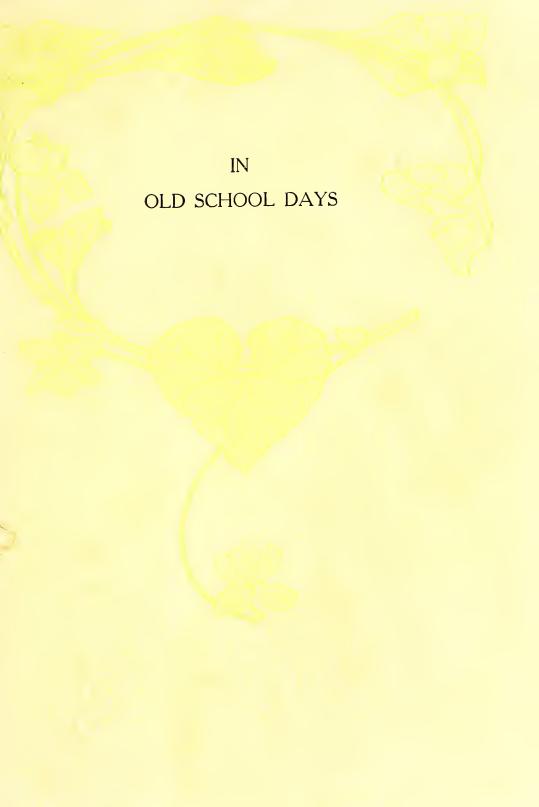




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His world was just in the seat ahead.

IN OLD SCHOOL DAYS

BY

WILL CARLETON

JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY
1907

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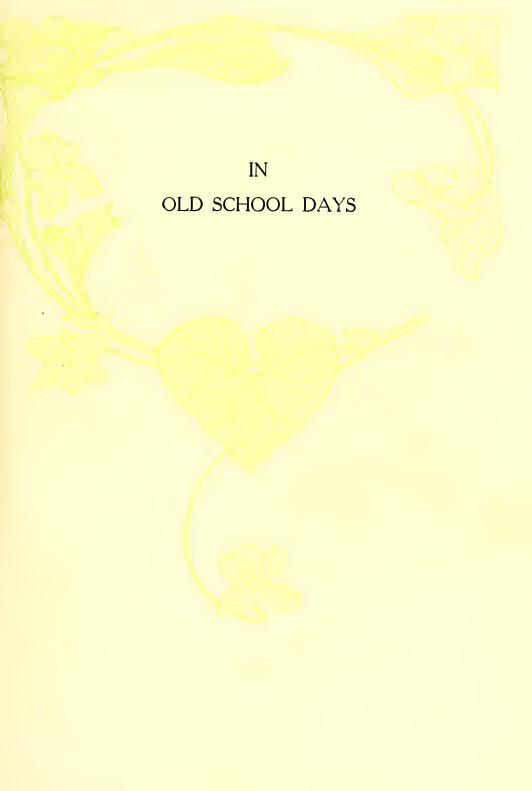
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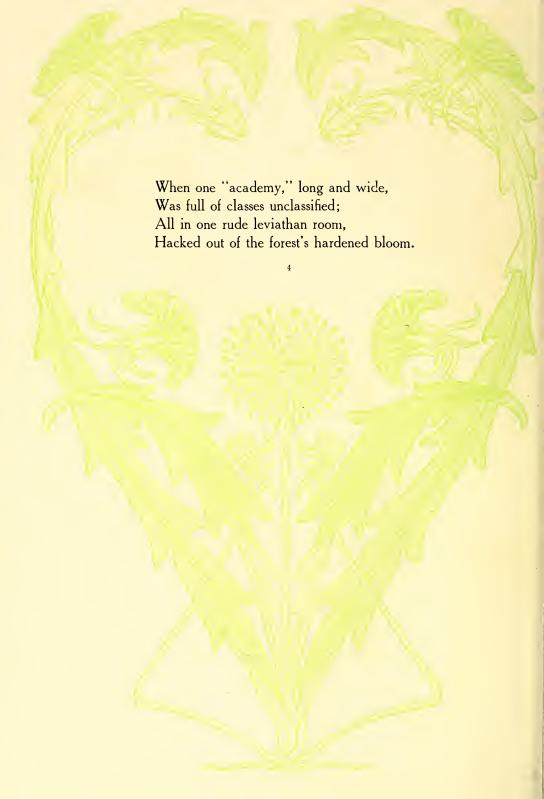
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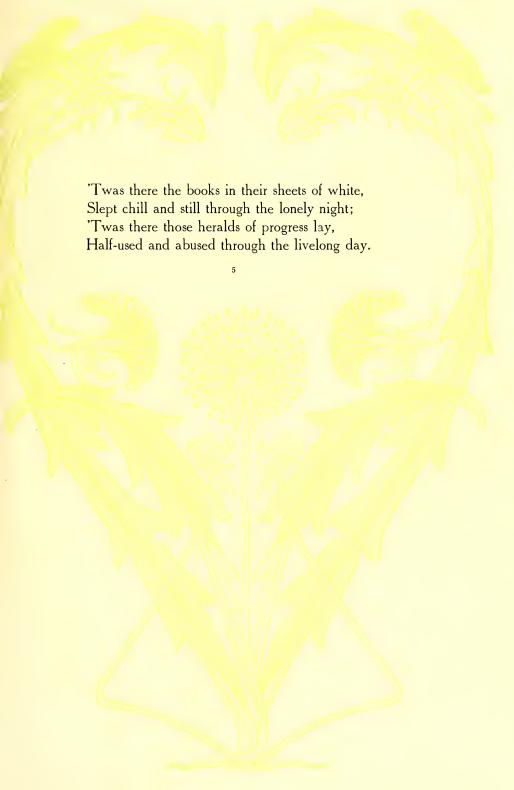
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O star-strown skies of the old school days!
Creep into the Twentieth Century's gaze,
Like some dear dreamily treasured rhymes,
And give us a glimpse of quaint old times,





O dull-hued benches, with bodies unclad In paint or varnish—what treasures you had! At one of you sat the little maid Whose brown eyes lurked in her blonde hair's shade; Whose soul crept up in her shapely hand, At things that she could not understand.

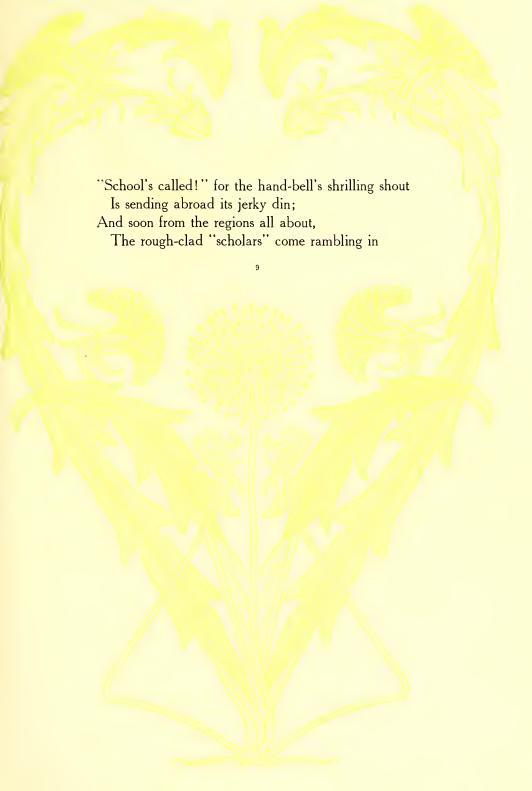


Whose soul crept up in her shapely hand.



O little girl with the hair so soft,
O little girl with the yearning eyes
And rosebud mouth! I have prayed full oft
You might grow happy as you grew wise!

How little you knew what later you knew, Before the studies of life were through! How many the tasks that would yet remain To puzzle your heart, as well as brain!



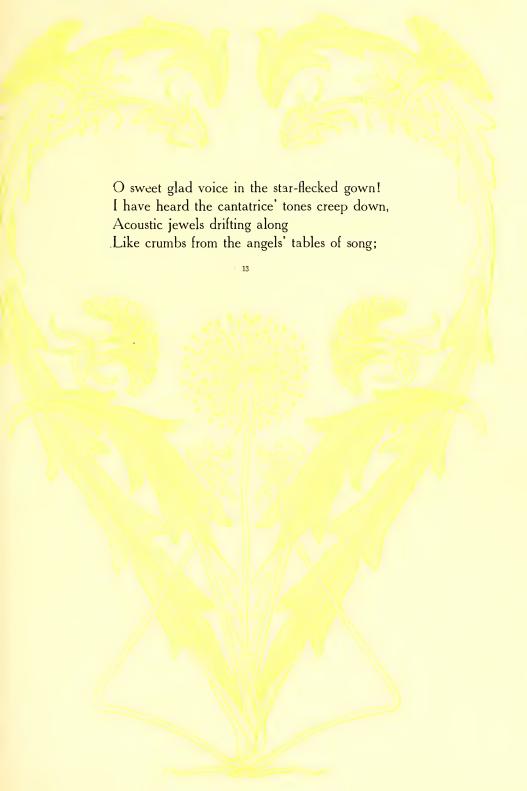
(What had not courted the stove's hearth-shine, And lingered around till the stroke of nine, Or lurked outside, with that spirit of war That good souls foster while they abhor, And battled each other to and fro, With bullets and cannon balls of snow). They stamp white dust from their leathern heels, They stow on the shelves their basket-meals; Then all are waiting, noisily still, The clank of the educational mill.

Perchance if the Teacher loves The Book
(As 'tis to be hoped he may) there rise
Prayer, reading and hymn, which humbly look,
And surely should reach, to the pure good skies.



O Sweet glad voice in the star-flecked gown!

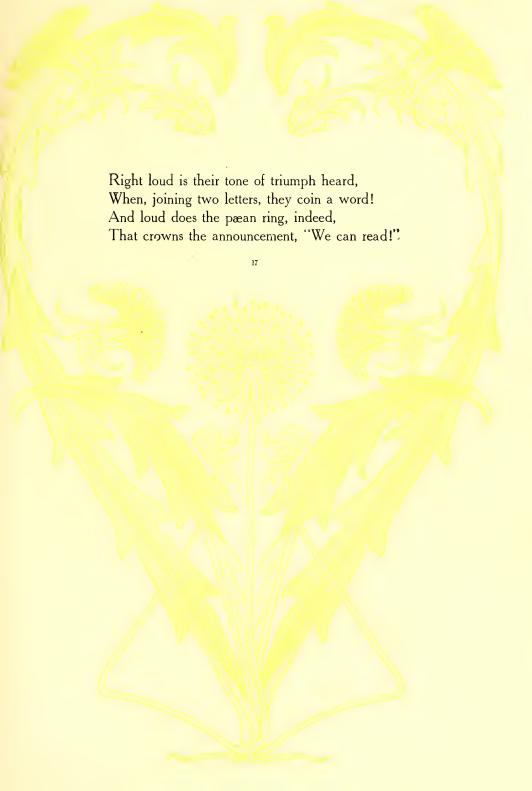




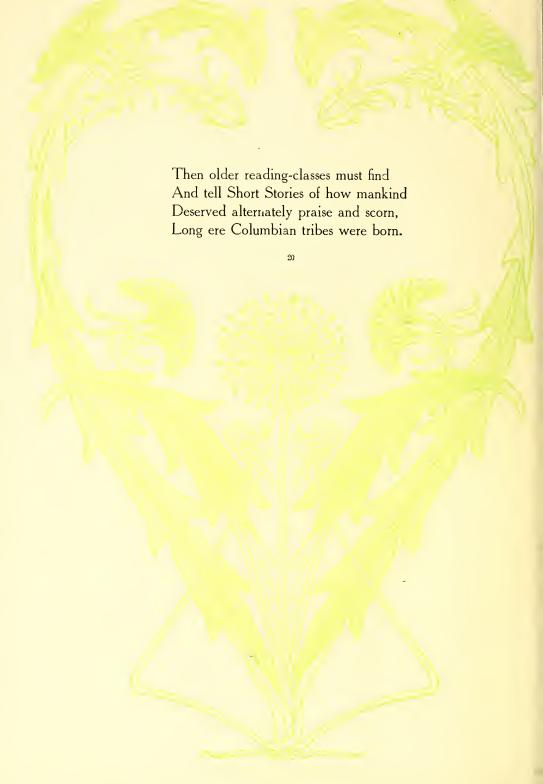
And she drew a fortune for every note,
And she was a goddess—to the view:
But rally that school, and I'll get a vote
That you were the thrillinger of the two!

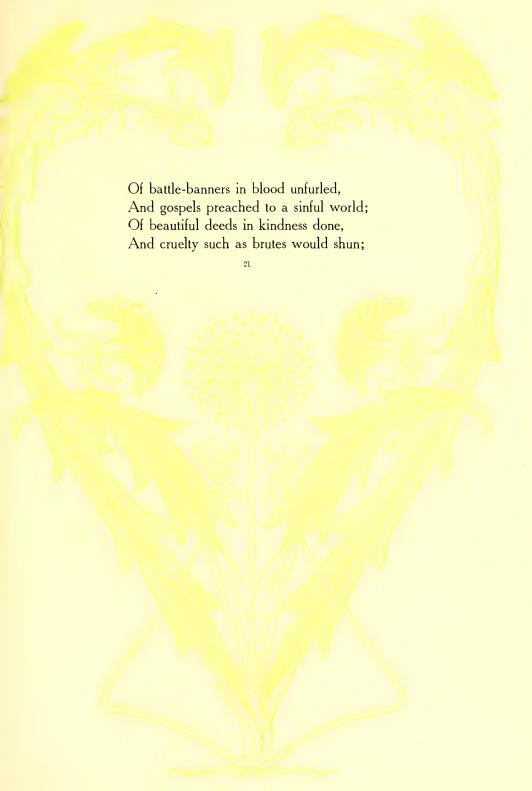
This university-in-a-room,
Has freshman students with childhood-bloom,
Who con the letters that long have clung
Together in words of the English tongue

They toddle down, with worry and fret,
The cellar-stairs of the alphabet;
Their travel is trapped by many cares:
Full oft they stick on the jagged stairs
That run through every fancy and use,
From Shakespeare-splendors to Mother Goose.



And "We go up," and "In we go", And "He is out", and "It is so", And "Ah, he was", and "Oh, ho ho", Are primitive words: but we may call Them not so different, after all, From longer ones that the grown folk use. In telling their ancient and modern news. (How much is printed, of good or ill, But those same words are its essence, still?)





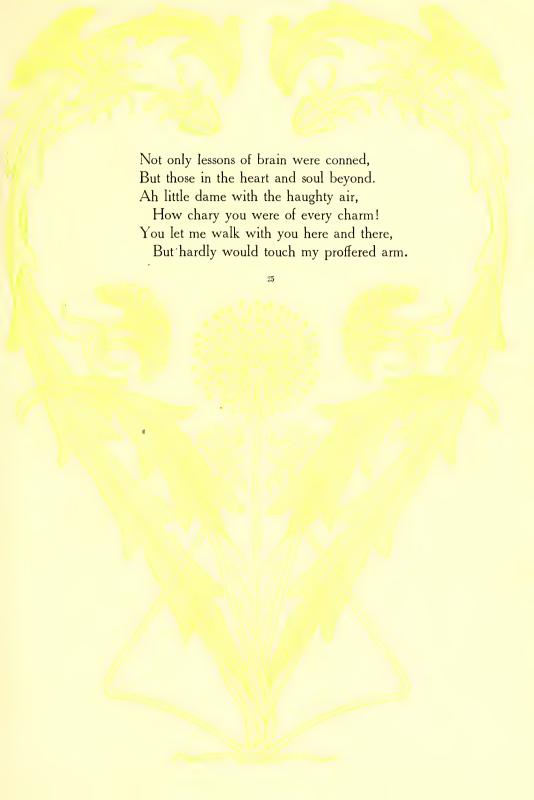
Of poverty starved in pangs untold, And banquets eaten on plates of gold; Of lyrics of love in sweetness sung, And fierce philippics that bite the tongue; Humility lifting Heaven's own latch, And pride just Satan himself could match; Of heroes praying for Joshua's sun, And cowards glad when the fight was done; Of birth-born struggles and dying breaths, Of clans' uprisings and nations' deaths:

What was there the human race concerned,
That properly under an eye could pass,
Some something of which could not be learned
Somehow and somewhere in the reading-class?



"But hardly would touch my proffered arm."





I said, "Is it worth the daily price,
To win a beautiful toy of ice,
A pretty freak of the frost-king's art,
A brain and a soul with famine of heart?"

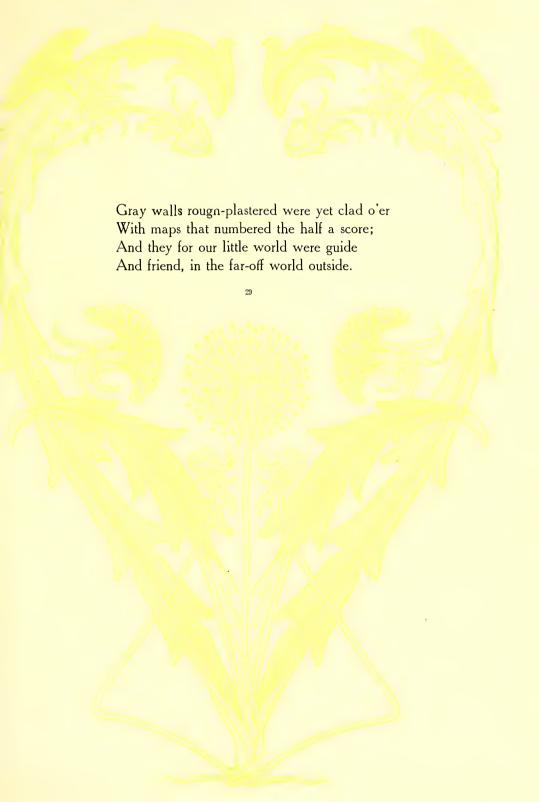
How little I knew that you lay and cried Yourself to sleep, when you just had learned That little Casabianca died, While even the air about him burned,

Because he was loyal, sure and game, And trusted the father that never came!... Not till together through flower and vine We gazed at Bingen upon the Rhine, I learned that the soldier in far Algiers, Had not the dearth of a schoolgirl's tears!

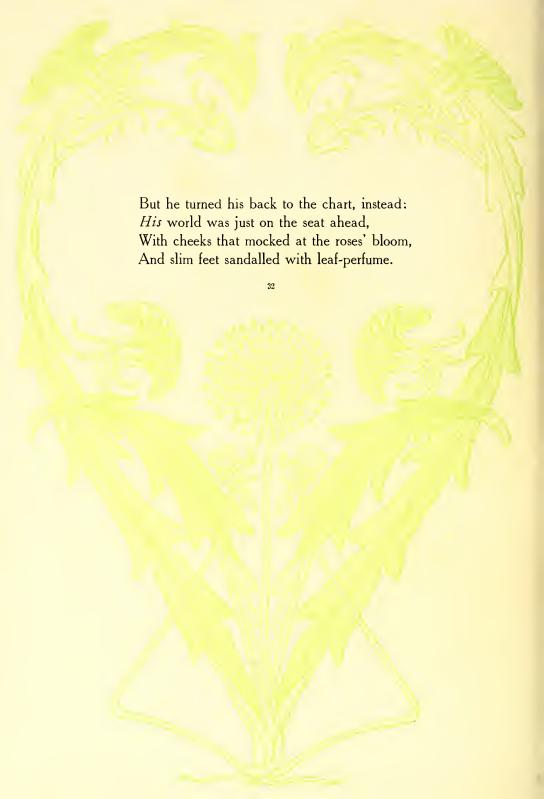


I learned that the soldier in far Algiers, Had not the dearth of a schoolgirl's tears.





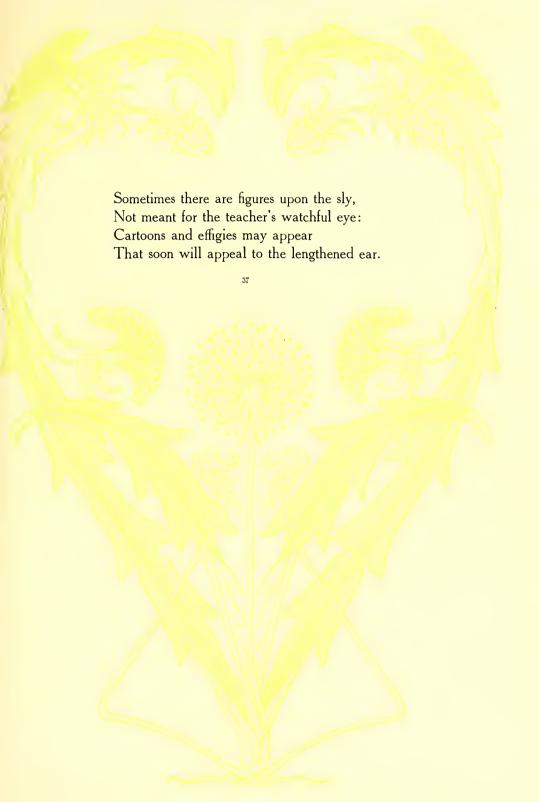
Long rivers were through rich valleys strung, And opulent cities hung and clung As flies to this richly tinted wall, Like Babylons fearing they soon might fall; Rough lakes and oceans were tossed in view, And mountains slumbered in beds of blue. Once, just in the dream of a summer day, A boy sat musing a minute away And stared at the world, with eyes thought-dim, That hung on the wall, and beckoned him, This lad who thirsted to win a name, To scenes of luxury, pride and fame.



The heart of the dreamer is now appalled: The "Class in Arithmetic!" is called! The multiplication-table song Is chanted in accents loud and long, And fierce assertions loud justified, That never on earth could be denied.

Or "up to the board" young victims walk, And trace the troubles of life in chalk: And dollars and cents, and pounds and pence, And buyings and sellings in sums immense, Are traced in elephantine affairs, As if the pupils were millionaires. There's not a figure in all the ten, But is made to lie, again and again, While poor old "1" 'neath hammers of fate, Is shattered to fractions small and great.

With honest effort and covert guilt,
From roof to cellar the "sums" are built;
And faces have all a delighted look,
If but their "answers" confirm the book,
No odds with what efforts strained and feigned,
Those final figures have been obtained.



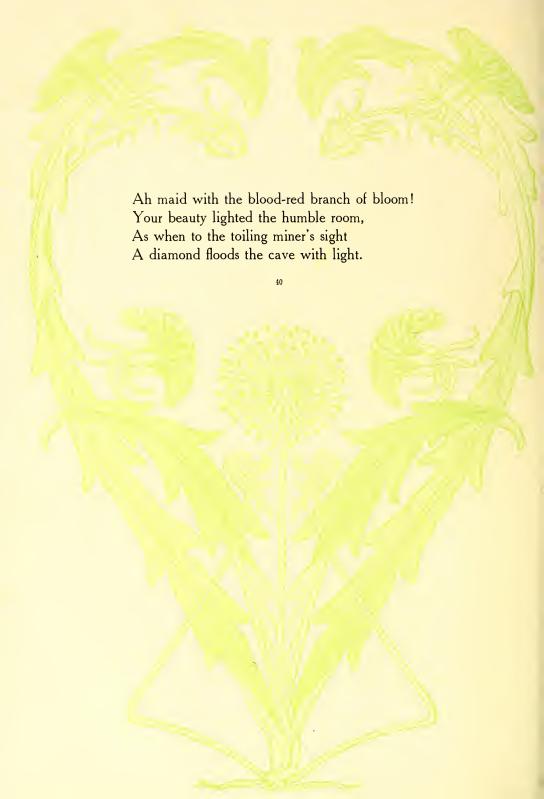
And e'en in the days when his art is sold, And publishers band his pencil with gold, Association may cross the track, And cause our artist to rub his back At thought of a supplementary stroke From the master himself, to shift the joke.



"Ah, maid with the blood-red branch of bloom!"



And there was the girl with fingers of white, Who never could make the "sums" come right, But who in the grasses could always see Most four-leaved clovers, instead of three.





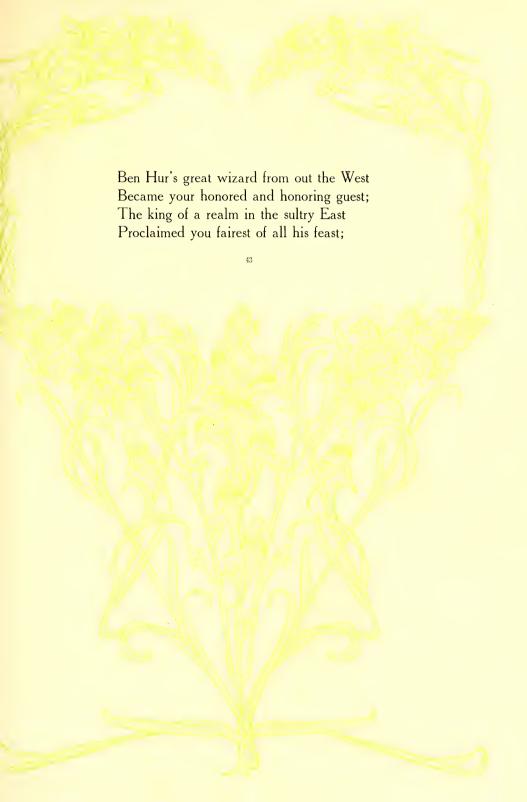
When even a child, you had the art

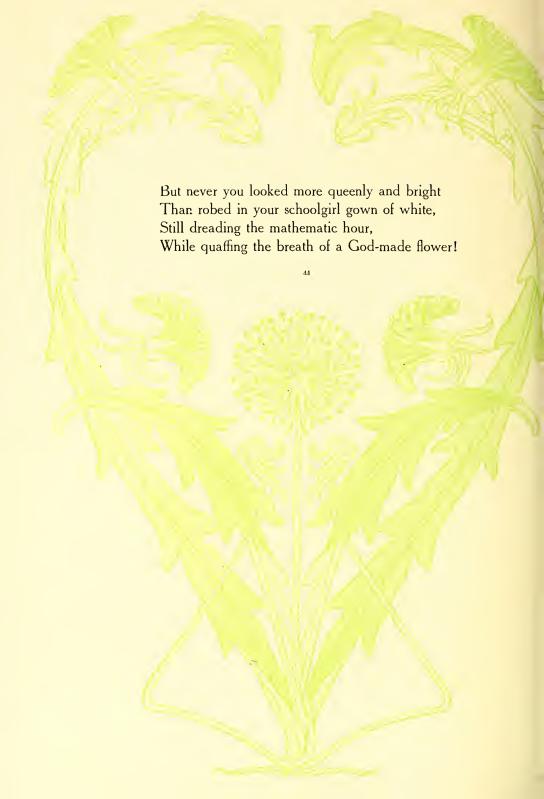
To stir to its depths the schoolboy heart!





1 saw you stand in the limelight's glare,
The Chief of the Nation welcomed you,
And princes of brain and heart were there,
And homage given that well was due:

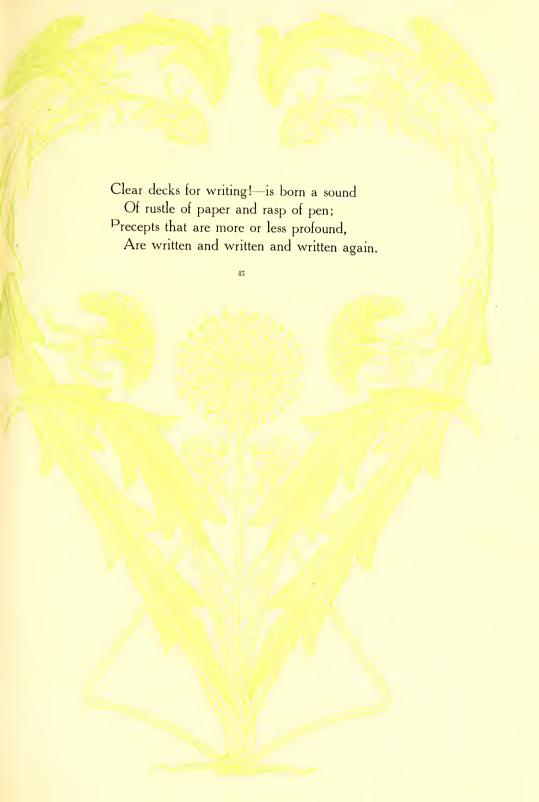


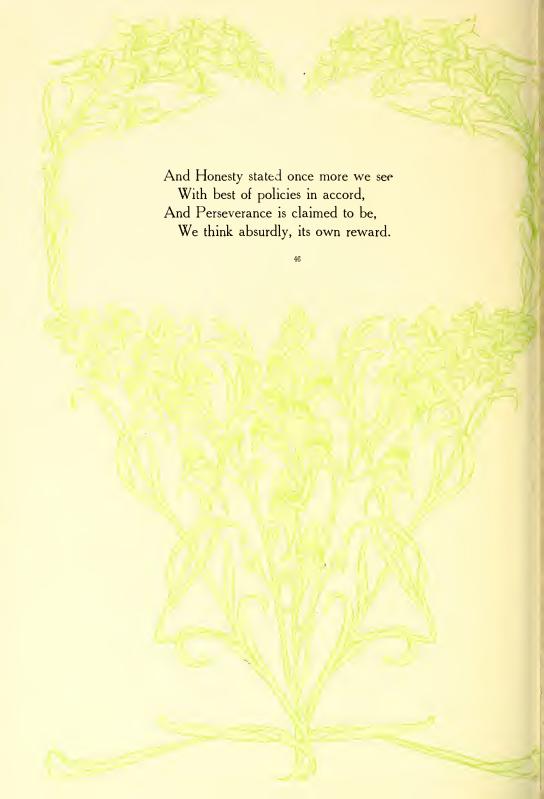


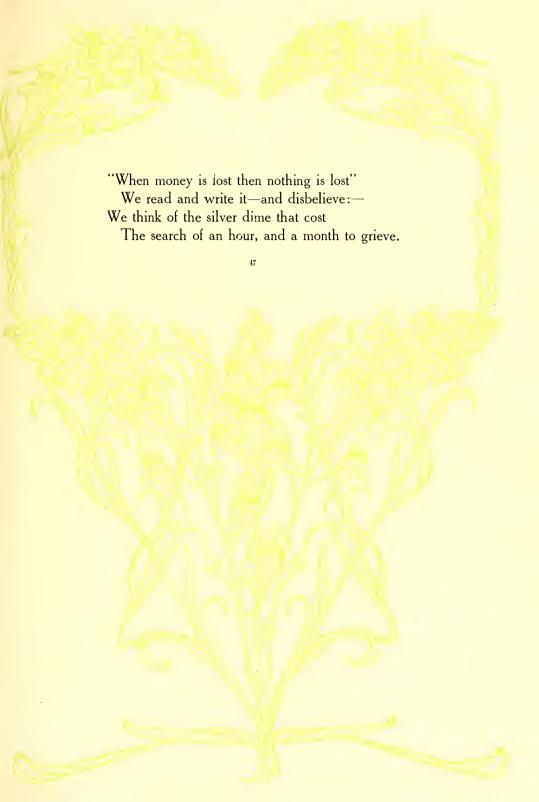


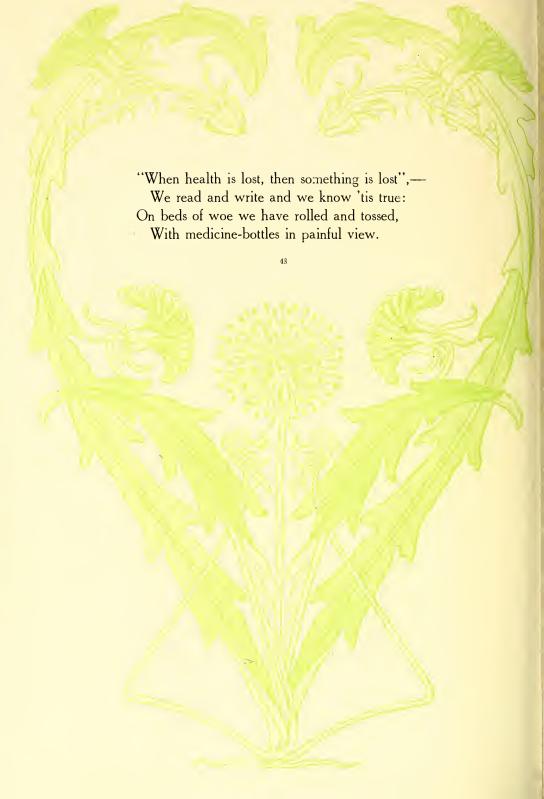
Of rustle of paper and rasp of pen.

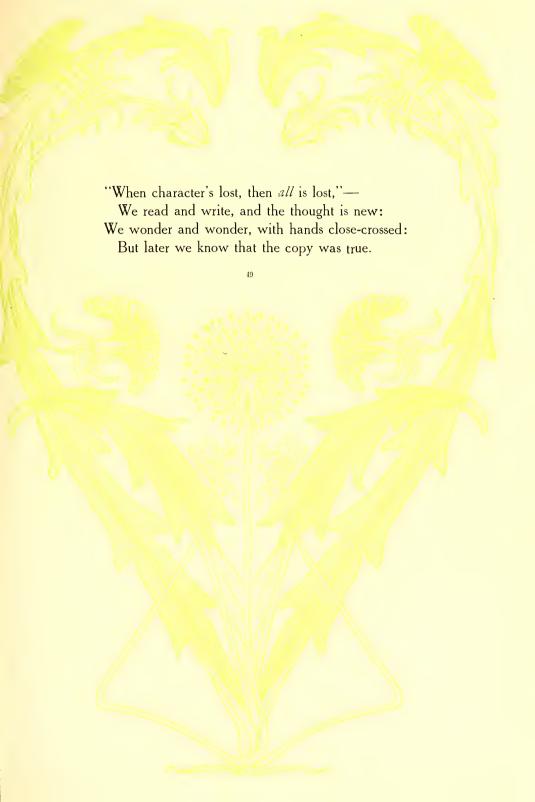


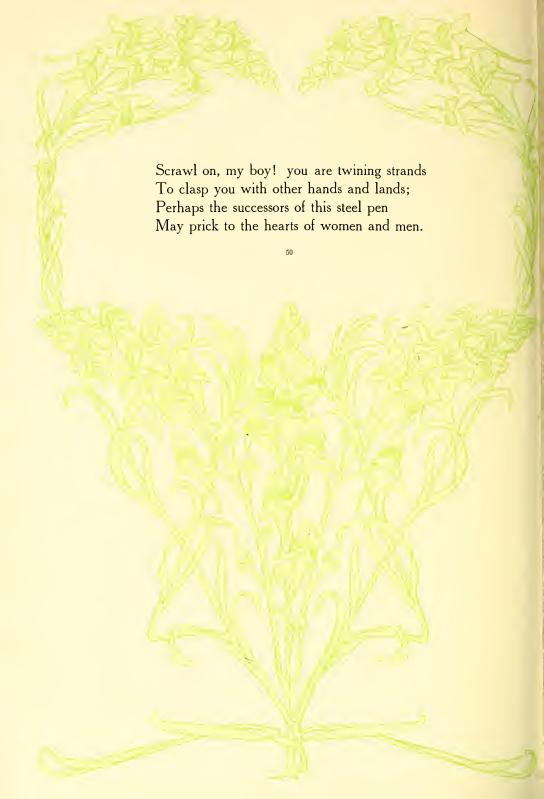










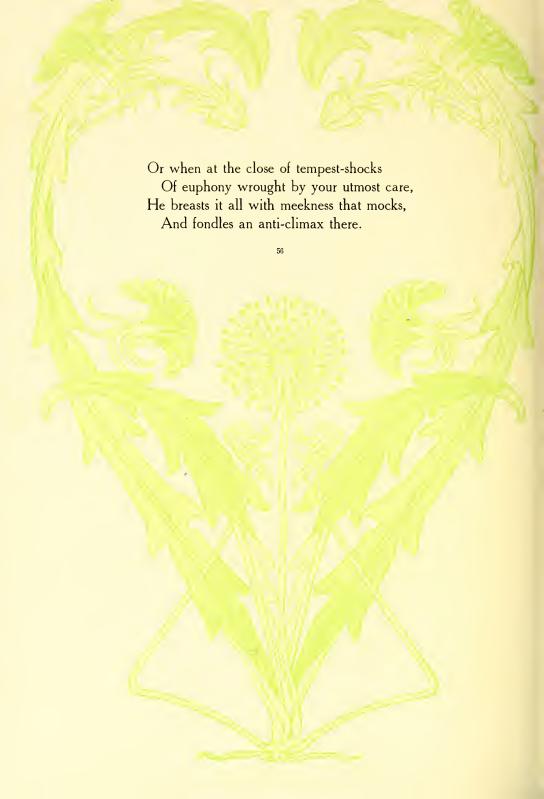


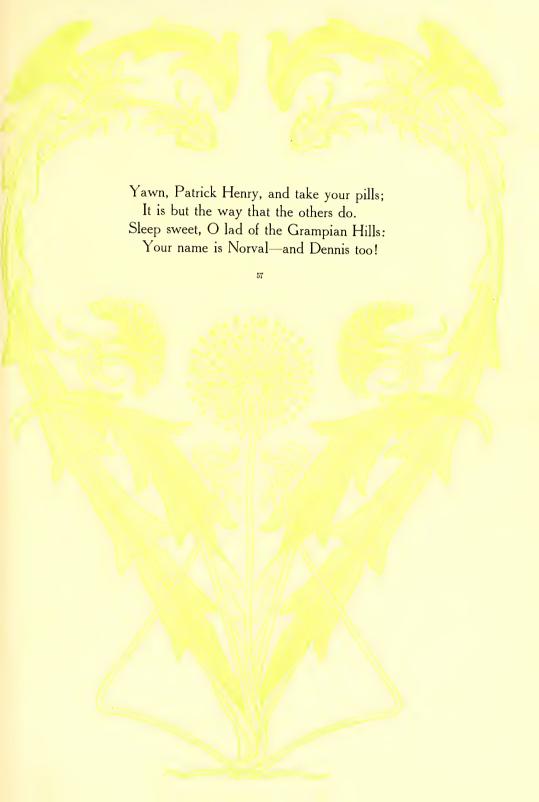
Its nibs may not work together right, Your inkstand maybe "froze up" last night, And blots on person and desks and page May throw the master into a rage; But every station, life has a knack Of reaching at length, if we keep the track.



O authors of note now safely dead, Each keep in his mildly remembered bed, With clay-wrought mattress and marble posts: Send not to these youths your indignant ghosts For trying to reach your diction's heart, And tearing the woof of the lines apart! Nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs,
Are plucked from the garden of your best powers,
And strung together and dried like herbs,
That once were hailed as blossoming flowers.

Or when in the "Speaking-pieces" time, The callowy boy disputes your rhyme, And makes your measures to jolt and creak, And mangles your words in his nervous cheek,

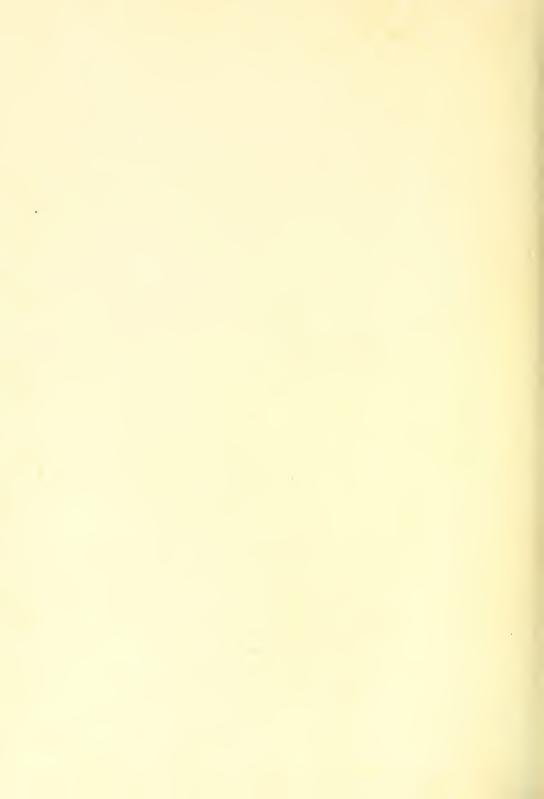




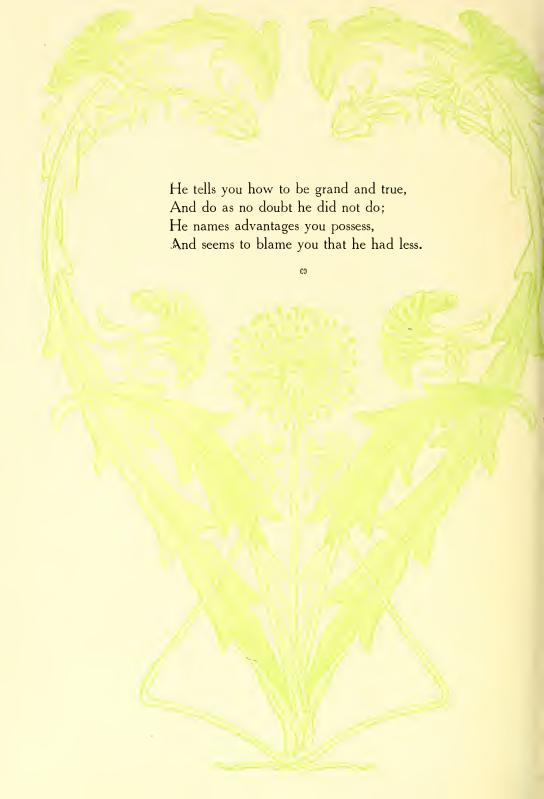
But do not flout this miniature man: He is simply doing the best he can, And maybe better than you, O sage, Could have carried it off at his tender age.

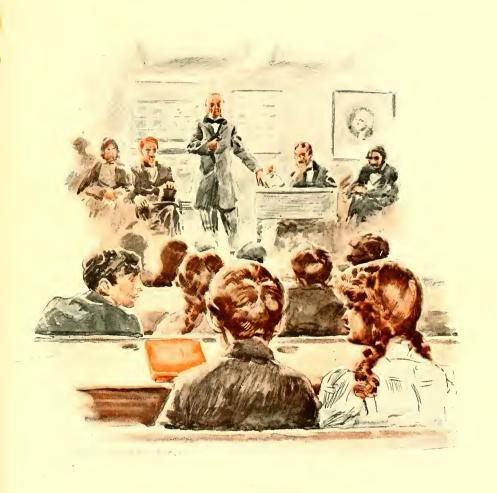


He is simply doing the best he can.



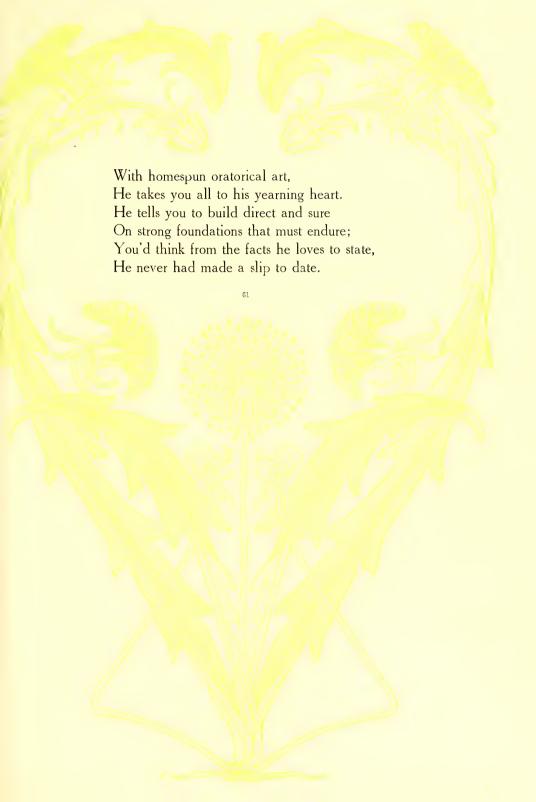
Now will you be good?—Director has come, To give you some lore where books are dumb; He offers you more advice sincere, Than you will work up in a calendar year;





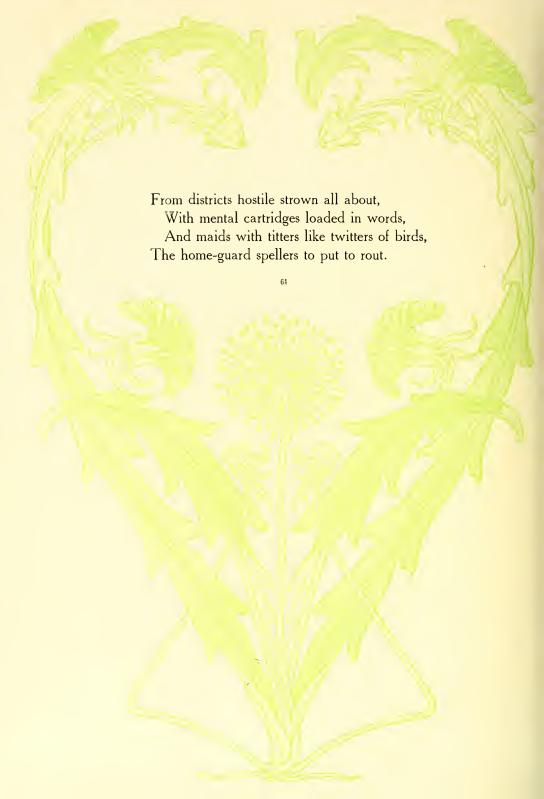
"Now will you be good? Director has come."

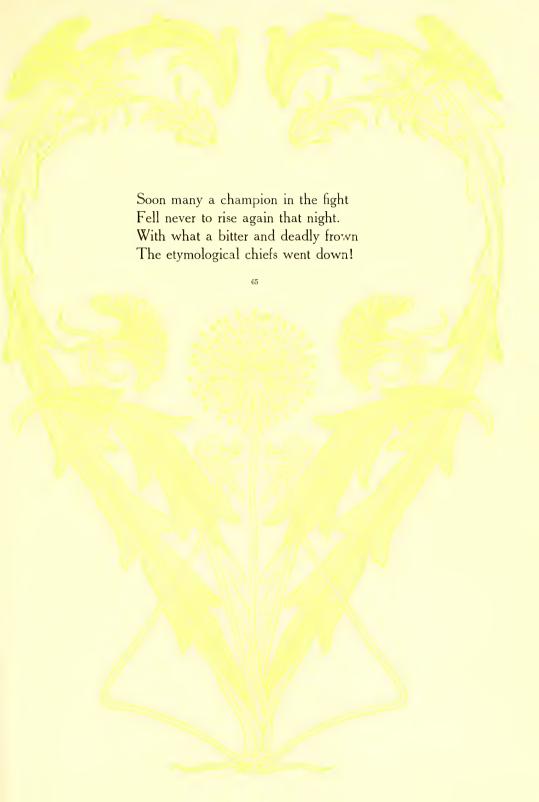




Be kind, O students, nor telegraph From desk to desk the derisive laugh: For many of you will some day be In many matters, the same as he!

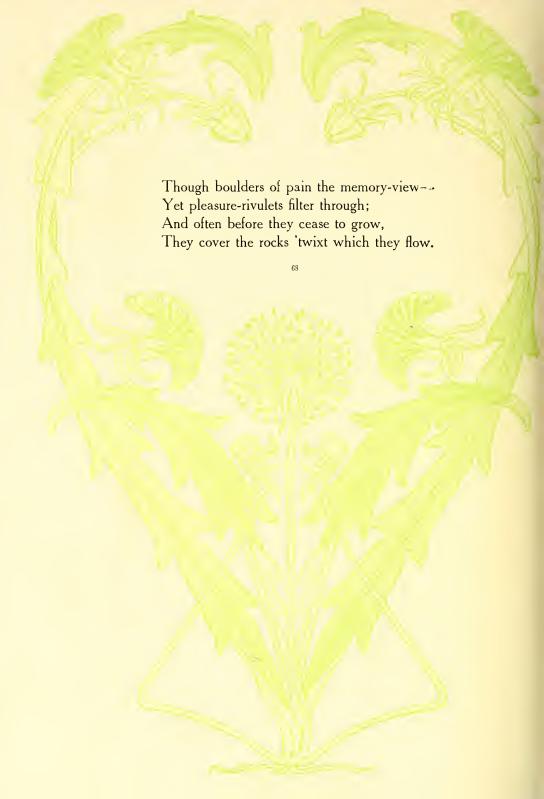
O old-school days! I would linger long.
In fact and fancy and prose and song,
Among your shadows and your delights,
Your windowed mornings and candled nights!
Such as spelling-bouts, where, wild and tame,
From other regions strong rivals came:

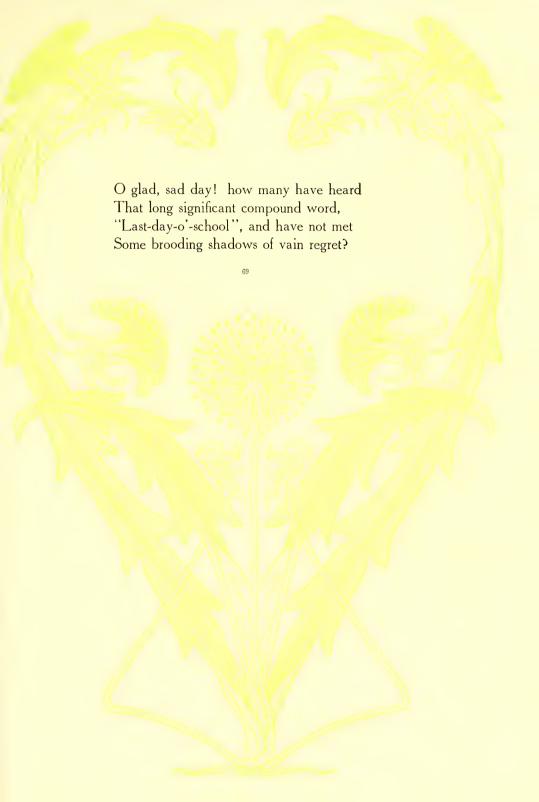




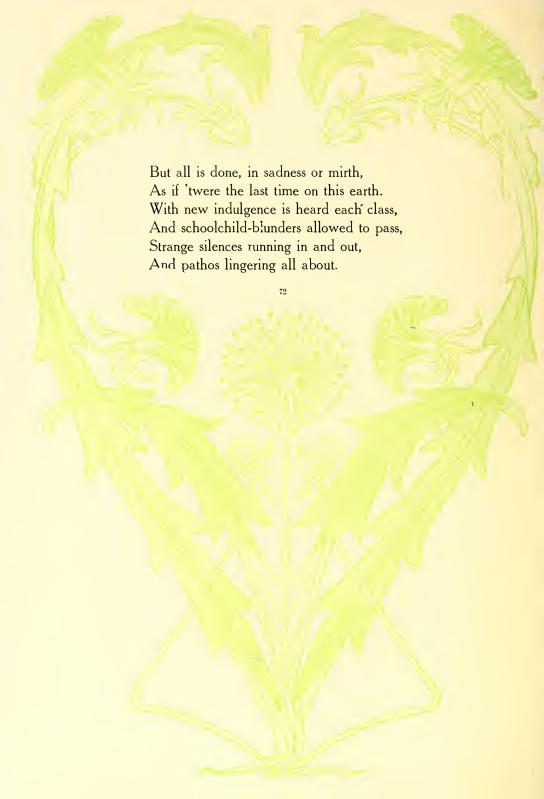
And maybe before that frown was lifted,
The scene of the battle of words was shifted,
And in the open forgathered foes,
And "blowing" was turned to business blows.

"Last-day-of-school!" when at last it came, We all were glad—and we all were sad: You know life never is just the same When anything goes that once was had.





A semester, nearly, on leaden wing, Has greeted Autumn, Winter, and Spring; But (all things earthly soon passing by) It is given a day in which to die. No wide alarum or grand display Attends this long, significant day: No "sheepskin's" Latin, wordily wise, To pull the wool o'er admiring eyes;

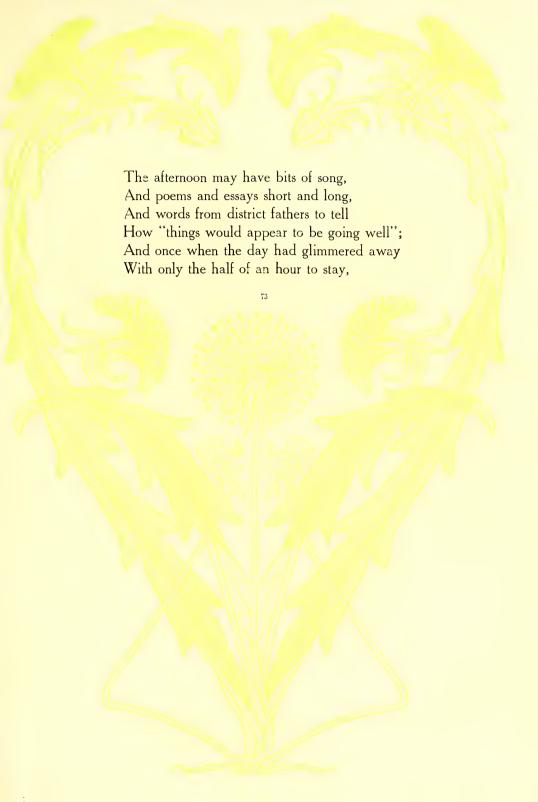




And words from district fathers tell

How "things would appear to be going well."

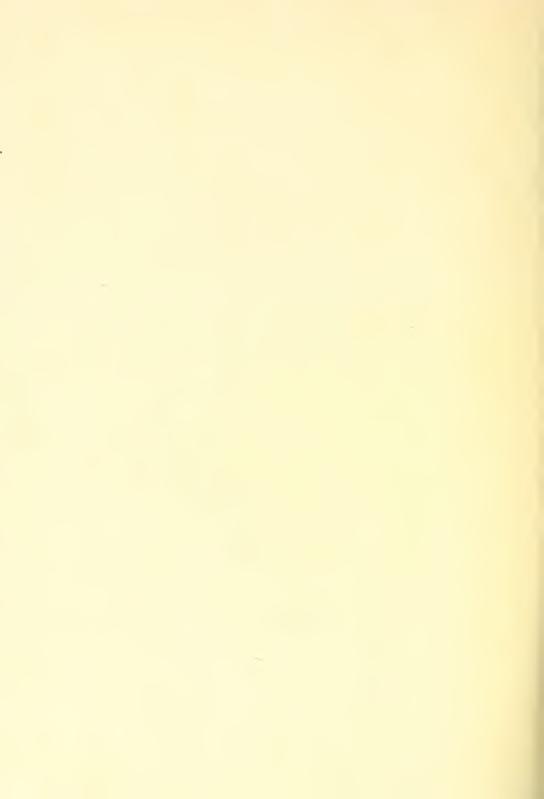




The maiden who some few years before
Had raised her pretty and dimpled hand
At sound of the unaccustomed lore
She (womanly) yearned to understand,



Crowned in her master's delighted gaze.



Now rose, with a subtle innocent grace, And love-locks lurking about her face, And golden tresses and silver tongue, And 'mid the applause's thrilling storm, And the white gown that closely clung So justifiably! to her form, With valedictory honors crowned (Though not by that name of classic sound), Crowned, in her Master's delighted gaze, Herself the Queen of the Old School Days.







